

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): FY 2016 Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPEC-16-012

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.415

Key Date/Application Deadline: December 28, 2015

Program Description/Executive Summary: The Professional Fellows Division in the Office of Citizen Exchanges at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) invites proposal submissions for the FY2016 Special Professional Fellows Program (PFP) for Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI). The Professional Fellows Program is a two-way, global exchange program designed to enhance leadership and professional skills, and build lasting and sustainable partnerships between mid-level emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States. The defining program activity for 250 foreign participants is a substantive five-week U.S.-based fellowship, including an individualized placement in a U.S. workplace, complemented by collaborative programming with American outbound participants in the foreign participant's home country.

It is the Bureau's intent to award one cooperative agreement of up to \$5,000,000. For additional details on awards, please see Section B. "Federal Award Information" below. Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years before openly competing it again.

A. Program Description:

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

A.1. Purpose:

The FY 2016 Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean in support of YLAI will bring 250 YLAI Professional Fellows, young business and social entrepreneurs from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), to the United States for a

five to six-week program designed to incubate and accelerate their work and promote lasting partnerships between them and counterparts in the United States. Approximately 30 U.S. counterparts will travel to relevant LAC countries to continue their work with Fellows on individual or joint initiatives and long-term engagement.

A.2. Goals

1. Strengthen the entrepreneurial and leadership skills of the YLAI Professional Fellows so they can achieve success—growing their business or organization in size and impact—and lead positive change in their workplaces, communities, and countries;
2. Provide opportunities for the YLAI Professional Fellows and U.S. counterparts to collaborate, network, and share ideas, approaches, and strategies;
3. Foster over 50 formal business and civil society partnerships each year between emerging entrepreneurial and civil society entities in LAC with their counterparts in the United States;
4. Help the YLAI Professional Fellows attract new support, investments, and in-kind resources for their businesses or organizations.

A.3. Program Details

As detailed below, the program will include professional placements, a robust online component and a concluding summit in Washington, D.C. A limited number of U.S. Fellows will later travel to LAC for approximately two weeks to directly support YLAI Professional Fellows' individual or joint ventures. The program will provide participants returning to their countries and communities with access to virtual resources, training, mentoring, and platforms to continue the collaborative projects they developed during their time in the United States. The first cohort of 250 fellows will come to the United States in 2016.

Each foreign participant will have a four-week custom-tailored professional development placement at a company or organization carefully matched to the participant's specific interests. Possibilities include start-ups, established small enterprises that are scaling up, small business groups, and – for the social entrepreneurs – non-governmental organizations. Host companies will be socially responsible businesses that have existing or potential ventures in and knowledge of the LAC region and are committed to assisting Fellows build their own businesses and/or joint ventures. Host civil society organizations will have expertise in both LAC and social entrepreneurship. The placements will provide participants with experience and information that will strengthen their entrepreneurial skills, and provide them with an opportunity to develop joint ventures and professional relationships with U.S. counterparts.

In order to foster cohesiveness among the participants and achieve consistency in the fellowship experience, participants will be grouped together, according to their areas of professional interest, in 10-20 city cohorts, each with 10-20 members. Each cohort will

be placed in a city that has strong, relevant resources for the group's area of focus (a tech-focused cohort will be placed in a high tech center, etc.).

To promote cohesiveness within each city cohort and further enhance the participants' entrepreneurial skills, in each city there will be a hub – a business incubator or some other appropriate organization – where all members of the city cohort will come together once or twice a week for workshops focused on key aspects of entrepreneurial activity and skills needed for success. For all city cohorts, City Hub sessions will also provide participants with mentorship opportunities with business leaders in their fields of interest. The workshops at all the hubs will be shaped by a single entrepreneurship curriculum to ensure consistency of experience for all YLAI Professional Fellows. At the same time, the hub sessions will have sufficient flexibility to respond to each cohort's specific interests and needs.

The Washington, D.C. summit at the end of the program will provide participants with the opportunity to showcase their initiatives and attract new investments, learn from others, network with leading figures in their field, as well as hear from top business, government, and civil society leaders.

A limited number of U.S. Fellows will later travel to LAC for approximately two weeks to directly support YLAI Professional Fellows individual or joint ventures and long-term collaboration.

YLAI will provide participants returning to their countries and communities with access to virtual resources, training, mentoring, and platforms to continue their collaboration.

A.4. Program Responsibilities

ECA's Level of Involvement: In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. ECA's activities and responsibilities for this program are as follows:

1. Participating and providing guidance in the design, direction, and execution of all program components and activities;
2. Approving key personnel;
3. Approving and providing input on program timelines and agendas;
4. Approving partner organizations and fellowship placement organizations;
5. Approving the final selection of all foreign Fellows;
6. Involvement, to the extent possible, in the final selection of U.S. Fellows;
7. Approving decisions related to special circumstances or problems throughout the duration of the program, including assisting with participant emergencies;
8. Assisting with SEVIS-related issues;
9. Issuing participant DS-2019 forms;
10. Enrolling fellows in the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for the duration of the program, issuing health benefits identifications cards, and providing instructions on host claim forms;

11. Liaising with relevant U.S. Embassies, country desk officers, and other relevant ECA offices at the State Department particularly in terms of recruitment, selection, web-based publicity efforts, and opening and closing events;
12. Working with award recipients to publicize the program through various media outlets (such as the social media platforms of ECA and Embassy Public Affairs Sections), including approving all program publicity, outreach efforts, and other materials;
13. Assisting in the coordination of the Fellows U.S. orientation and DC-based YLAI Summit; and
14. Monitoring and evaluating the program through regular communication with the award recipient, meetings, site visits, and debriefing sessions. Liaising with ECA's Office of Evaluation and the award recipient.

Award Recipient Responsibilities will include but are not limited to the following:

1. In close collaboration with ECA, design, plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate a two-way international exchange program for 250 YLAI Professional Fellows, young business and social entrepreneurs from approximately 28 LAC countries, and a limited number of U.S. participants, that will strengthen the participants' skills and provide them with opportunities to network and collaborate;
2. Provide a plan that outlines the selection process and defines the nature and extent of services required by any subrecipient(s). Note: All subawards are subject to the same cooperative agreement management requirements as are the funds in the original award from the federal government to the primary award recipient. And, the primary award recipient is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements by both the subaward recipient as well as itself;
3. Identify potential subaward recipients and provide a letter of intent from each;
4. Develop a robust recruitment strategy that targets individual participants meeting the eligibility criteria for the program and adheres to ECA's goals for a merit-based open competition;
5. Identify or develop a web-based platform that can seamlessly collect and share applicant information with ECA;
6. Develop a transparent review process to assess candidate applications for the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean. The award recipient will work closely with ECA on the development and implementation of review criteria and keep ECA informed about its application and assessment process;
7. Arrange virtual or in-person English language interviews for semi-finalists during the second round of the selection process;
8. Conduct pre-departure orientations (virtual or otherwise) for finalists in home countries, answering their questions on programmatic issues, including, but not limited to, Fellowship and community placements, program responsibilities and expectations, travel, accident and sickness benefits, housing, etc.;
9. Utilize the Web and other outreach tools to facilitate communication among newly selected finalists and host organizations prior to their arrival in the United States, including the posting of program and community resources, pre-program assignments, and personal travel logs;

10. For approximately 65% of the 250 Fellows, arrange four- to five-week fellowships at socially responsible businesses that have existing or potential ventures in and knowledge of target LAC countries, and are open to assisting Fellows build their own businesses and/or joint ventures;
11. For approximately 35% of the 250 Fellows, arrange four to-five-week fellowships at civil society organizations with expertise in both LAC and social entrepreneurship;
12. Create programmatic guidelines and materials for U.S. host businesses and organizations. The award recipient should provide a virtual orientation for U.S. host institutions that clearly outlines hosting roles and responsibilities;
13. Arrange round-trip travel for participants from their home cities to the United States;
14. Arrange all international and domestic travel and local transportation for all Fellows;
15. Organize weekly advanced entrepreneurial training for all Fellows city cohorts;
16. Consult closely with ECA on developing a comprehensive outreach strategy for highlighting participant achievements while in the United States and after their return home, including the use of online and other social media platforms;
17. Monitor participants and the performance of host institutions for the duration of the Fellowship;
18. Work closely with foreign Fellows in the design and implementation of U.S. Fellows' outbound travel program;
19. In close coordination with ECA, design, plan, implement, and evaluate a U.S.-based orientation and concluding D.C.-based YLAI Summit for all 250 YLAI Fellows.
20. Evaluate the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean and its impact on foreign and U.S. participants during their fellowship program and after they return to their home countries. Evaluation plans should include how the award recipient will capture results of the foreign Fellows' individual or joint ventures and how and when those results will be reported to ECA; work closely with the program office and ECA's Office of Evaluation to assure coordination of evaluation efforts as much as possible so as not to overburden participants with redundant or overlapping survey instruments/questions;
21. Manage financial aspects of the program (including timely disbursement of participant stipends, housing allowances, accident and sickness benefits, hosting agreements, and other activity costs) and promptly report any irregularities in the budget or spending to ECA;
22. Notify ECA of all international travel of award recipient staff;
23. Participate in a pre-, mid-, and post-program review with ECA (in person, by telephone, or video-conference) to identify any programmatic and/or budgetary matters of concern;
24. Provide monthly programmatic, financial and statistical information to ECA outlining general programmatic activities conducted during the previous month and anticipated programmatic activities to be conducted in the coming month;
25. Respond fully and promptly to ad hoc requests for program information from ECA;

26. Ensure compliance with the terms of the Cooperative Agreement with ECA, including, but not limited to, submitting timely financial and program reports and proper budget oversight; and
27. Develop a post-program support plan to provide ongoing support (networking, mentorship, and investment opportunities) to Fellows for the year following the completion of their Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean.

A.5. Program Components and Definitions

1. Program Participants

“Program participants” are defined as those individuals who travel under award funding from their country of origin to a designated exchange country. For this NOFO, program participants are also referred to as “YLAI Professional Fellows.”

Employees of the award recipient and any subaward recipient staff are not eligible to participate in the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean and should not be included as program participants.

2. Partner Organizations

Applicant organizations that do not have an existing in-country presence in each target country must identify a foreign-based partner (“in-country partner”) with whom they propose to collaborate. In addition, proposals must demonstrate capacity to secure effective and appropriate host placements for all foreign Fellows in the United States.

3. Recruitment and Selection of Fellows

Award recipients must develop an online Program Announcement and Program Application that all eligible foreign professionals can access and submit online. The online application should include an “opt-in” button allowing applicants to register their willingness to receive content and participate in online activities.

In collaboration with ECA, the award recipient will recruit and select a total of 250 foreign Fellows from each of the following 28 countries. The number of Fellows per country will range from three to 15. ECA reserves the right to amend or modify the list of participating countries should conditions change in the nominating country or if other countries are identified as U.S. foreign policy priorities. Participating countries will be determined by ECA, in coordination with the Public Affairs Sections at U.S. embassies abroad.

ECA also reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets based on program needs and the availability of U.S. Government funding. The award recipient should plan on using the following ranges according to the country groupings below:

# Foreign Fellows/ Country	Group 1 3 to 5	Group 2 5 to 10	Group 3 10 to 15
	Bahamas	Argentina	Brazil

	Barbados	Bolivia	Colombia
	Belize	Chile	Cuba
	Curaçao	Costa Rica	Mexico
	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	Venezuela
	Guyana	El Salvador	
	Haiti	Guatemala	
	Jamaica	Honduras	
	Suriname	Nicaragua	
	Trinidad and Tobago	Panama	
		Paraguay	
		Peru	
		Uruguay	
#Foreign Fellows by grouping			
	30 to 50	65 to 130	50 to 75
#U.S. Fellows by grouping	At least 5	At least 10	At least 15

NOTE: All countries **in bold** should be recruited at the top of the range for group 2.

The ratio of business entrepreneurs to social entrepreneurs will be two to one (business to social) or approximately 65% business and 35% social of the 250 YLAI Professional Fellows.

Foreign Fellows

Foreign Fellows must be selected through an open, merit-based, competitive process in consultation with ECA and the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the respective U.S. Embassies in relevant LAC countries. While PAS should be involved in the final participant selection, full responsibility for project coordination and implementation lies with the award recipient.

Award applicants must demonstrate how diversity (in the broadest sense) will be integrated into all aspects of the program, and include an appropriate balance of women, minorities, and marginalized populations, including individuals with disabilities, etc. See reasonable accommodations section under allowable costs section for more info on individuals with disabilities.

Participant selection criteria for foreign Fellows must include the following:

- Emerging business or social entrepreneurs, 21 to 35 years old, with a demonstrated track record of at least two years of recent or current (and preferably successful) experience with either start-up businesses or social ventures.

- Little or no experience in the United States; it is essential that the YLAI Professional Fellows not be people who have already participated in USG programs or spent significant amounts of time in the United States.
- Participants must demonstrate a commitment to develop and lead an existing or new venture. During the application process, successful candidates must provide a well-defined business plan they will work to refine and for which they will seek support during their Fellowships.
- Both social and business entrepreneurs must demonstrate the viability of their ventures through indicators such as: investment to date, current or planned number of employees, profits, social impact analysis, and an overall track record of achievement in the field.
- Social entrepreneurs should have experience in one or more of the following areas: (1) alleviating youth unemployment; (2) creating positive alternatives and economic opportunities for at-risk youth; (3) increasing social inclusion; or (4) promoting transparency and fighting corruption.
- Business entrepreneurs must demonstrate how their businesses will: (1) alleviate unemployment, especially among youth, and (2) create economic opportunities for at-risk communities.
- Demonstrated proficiency in both written and oral English that qualifies him or her to have “working-level knowledge of English” that has been verified by each award recipient.
- Self-directed and able to work effectively in a cross-cultural setting.

In the context of this program “social entrepreneur” is defined as an individual who implements, scales, and sustains an innovative solution to a pressing social challenge. Such social enterprises can be for-profit or non-profit. “Business entrepreneur” is defined as a person who has successfully started his or her own for-profit business and has successfully grown the business for at least two years.

U.S. Fellows

The award recipient will select approximately 30 U.S. Fellows in an open, merit-based, competitive process in consultation with ECA. U.S. participants should be selected from host businesses and organizations or others who serve as mentors to the LAC Fellows. U.S. Fellows will have direct knowledge of and engagement with one or more of the foreign Fellows during the U.S. fellowship component.

4. U.S.-Based Fellowship Components for Foreign Fellows

The primary award recipient will design and implement a U.S.-based fellowship component for foreign Fellows that is five to six weeks in length. Key program elements must include:

1. A “pre-departure orientation” (PDO) in the YLAI Professional Fellows’ home countries before traveling to the United States;
2. A U.S.-based orientation for all 250 YLAI Professional Fellows in Washington, D.C. or another appropriate location;
3. A substantive fellowship placement that is tailored to each foreign YLAI Professional Fellow’s work/interests;

4. Weekly advanced entrepreneurial training sessions in which all YLAI Professional Fellows in a city cohort will participate;
5. Assistance for each foreign YLAI Professional Fellow in developing individual or joint ventures to implement in their home country;
6. Upon conclusion of the fellowship placement, travel to Washington, D.C. for all foreign YLAI Professional Fellows for participation in the YLAI Professional Fellows Summit;
7. A debrief with U.S. Embassy representatives upon return to home country;
8. A plan for post-fellowship engagement with the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows; and
9. A program evaluation.

Program activities in the United States for foreign YLAI Professional Fellows should also, if possible, include a volunteer/community service element. Also, every effort should be made for the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows to engage with a wide range of U.S. citizens regarding their work and their home country, such as through community/school presentations, media interviews, etc.

5. Fellowship Placements

The program will foster cohesiveness among the participants and there will be a high degree of consistency in the fellowship experience. Participants will be grouped together, according to their areas of professional interest, in 10-20 city cohorts, each with 10-20 members. Each cohort will be placed in a city that has strong, relevant resources for the group's area of focus (a tech-focused cohort in a high tech center, etc.).

The award recipient must secure, at least a month in advance of the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows arriving in the United States, a substantive and appropriately tailored fellowship placement that is a minimum of four weeks in length. The purpose of the fellowship placement is to provide foreign YLAI Professional Fellows with a professional development program at companies, universities, incubators, and non-governmental organizations that includes direct experience with the day-to-day workings of a U.S. workplace and the opportunity to develop joint ventures and professional relationships with U.S. counterparts.

6. Host Organizations

Proposals should discuss how the award recipient will recruit and select U.S. fellowship placement businesses and organizations. To ensure that each foreign YLAI Professional Fellow has a substantive professional experience, each fellowship placement should involve the commitment of a designated host/supervisor/mentor who understands the goals and objectives of the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean. Proposals that secure one fellowship placement during the exchange rather than multiple, short-term placements with different U.S. organizations will be deemed more competitive under the Review Criterion: Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives. Site visits where the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows have only a brief glimpse of a variety of organizations should be kept to a minimum.

7. Individual or Joint Ventures

Proposals should describe how the award recipient will work, throughout the life of the award, with each foreign YLAI Professional Fellow and his/her U.S. counterpart(s) on the development and implementation of the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows' individual or joint venture upon return to his/her home country. Proposals should include a timeline for the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows to create drafts and final versions of the venture "Action Plan" as well as progress report deadlines the Fellows will follow to update the award recipient.

8. City Hubs and Advanced Entrepreneurial Training

To promote cohesiveness within each city cohort and further enhance the participants' entrepreneurial skills, in each city there will be a hub – a business incubator or some other appropriate organization – where all members of the city cohort will come together once or twice a week for workshops focused on key aspects of entrepreneurial activity and skills needed for success. For all city cohorts, City Hub sessions will also provide participants with mentorship opportunities with business leaders (or successful social entrepreneurs) in their fields of interest. The workshops at all the hubs will be shaped by a single entrepreneurship curriculum to ensure consistency of experience for all YLAI Professional Fellows. At the same time, the hub sessions will have sufficient flexibility to respond to each cohort's specific interests and needs.

Topics for City Hub workshops for business entrepreneurs might include:

- Growing Beyond Start-Up
- Bootstrapping and Noncommercial Financing
- The Shared Economy and Emerging Markets
- Crowdfunding and Angel Investing
- What Attracts Venture Capital/Private Equity
- Trading with the United States
- Intra-Regional Entrepreneurship and Trade
- Linking to International Supply Chains
- Payment Platforms
- Scaling Your Business Operations
- Connecting With Your Customer
- How To 'Fail Forward'
- Specialty Incubators and Innovation Hubs
- Addressing Global Challenges via Entrepreneurship
- New and Better Models for Training Entrepreneurs

Possible topics for City Hub workshops for social entrepreneurs:

- Defining a long-term strategy and appropriate goals
- Staying focused on the core mission; avoiding mission creep
- For-profit vs. non-profit – charting the right course
- The challenge of performance measurement

- What is return on investment in a social entrepreneurship?
- The challenge of scaling up

Note: All the workshops should be designed for experienced entrepreneurs and civil society professionals with a record of success. Content should not be too basic, theoretical, or irrelevant to the Fellows' professional and cultural contexts. Sessions should be geared, as much as possible, to not simply helping the participants successfully complete their fellowships, but more importantly offer practical information that will be useful to them in their new or continuing ventures at home.

9. Online Component

The program will have a robust online component that will have three main functions: (1) link all the YLAI Professional Fellows together virtually throughout their stay in the United States; (2) serve as an additional source of information on how to be a successful entrepreneur, supplementing the professional placement and the hub sessions; and (3) provide the YLAI Professional Fellows (business entrepreneurs as well as social entrepreneurs) with a platform to showcase their projects and business plans for potential investors.

10. Orientation Conference and Closing Summit

To foster cohesiveness and networking among the YLAI Professional Fellows, all 250 participants will come together at the beginning of the program in an orientation meeting and at the end in a YLAI Summit. The summit will take place in Washington, D.C mid-November 2016. The orientation meeting could also be in Washington or – if the implementer puts forward a compelling case – a different location in the United States. The YLAI Summit will provide participants with the opportunity to showcase their initiatives and attract new investments, learn from others, network with leading figures in their fields, as well as hear from top business, government, and civil society leaders.

The orientation at a minimum should cover:

- travel logistics, including arrival information and J-1 visa regulations;
- project goals, programmatic expectations, performance measurement;
- a detailed Program Schedule, including specific information about the community where each fellow will be located; and
- cross-cultural issues and day-to-day considerations of living and working in the United States, including standards of conduct.

The YLAI Summit will provide the YLAI Professional Fellows an opportunity to:

- network with colleagues from across the LAC region, share their U.S. experiences, and learn from the experiences of other YLAI Professional Fellows;
- examine ways an individual, organization, or interest group can generate change for the common good;
- engage with other YLAI Professional Fellows on key regional challenges, and strengthen people-to-people ties among young LAC leaders;
- showcase their initiatives;

- network with leading figures in their field and hear from top business, government, and civil society leaders;
- Attract new support, investments, and in-kind resources for their business or organization.

11. Outbound Program for U.S. Fellows

The award recipient will design and implement a limited number of outbound programs, approximately two weeks in length, for U.S. Fellows to travel to LAC.

U.S. Fellows will conduct joint programming with the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows and their colleagues, and directly support U.S. public diplomacy objectives and the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean's goals of building sustainable and lasting formal business and civil society partnerships. Proposals should describe how the U.S. outbound components will support the foreign Fellows' individual venture plans.

While the ECA award will support the travel of up to 30 U.S. Fellows, the recipient is strongly encouraged to cost-share travel for additional U.S. Fellows working on joint initiatives with LAC Fellows.

12. Collaboration with the Public Affairs Section at U.S. Embassies

The award recipient will need to work closely with the Public Affairs Section of the respective Embassies in the YLAI target countries to develop plans for project implementation, including the selection of foreign Fellows and inviting of PAS staff to participate in various in-country program activities. It is important that all U.S. outbound program schedules are shared in a timely manner with the PAS. U.S. Fellows will likely be subject matter experts on issues pertinent to various U.S. foreign policy objectives in the respective country. The expertise and willingness of the U.S. Fellows to take part in public diplomacy outreach can greatly complement in-country PAS programs, thereby enhancing the impact of the exchange and its value to our PAS colleagues. The proposal should address plans for maintaining a close working relationship with the Public Affairs Section throughout the life of the award.

13. Debrief with Embassy Representatives upon Return to Home Country

Proposals should include a plan for a scheduled debrief with Embassy representatives after the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows return to their home countries.

14. Post-Fellowship Support

Proposals should include concrete plans for sustainable engagement between YLAI Professional Fellows and host businesses and organizations. Proposals should clearly articulate how the award recipient will provide ECA with regular updates on successful business and social outcomes resulting from the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean.

15. Alumni Programming

The proposal should include a defined strategy for alumni engagement of the foreign Fellows that supports the goals of the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean and ECA. The proposal must include:

1. an outline of proposed activities for alumni engagement;
2. strategies to connect newly minted alumni professionally, nationally, and regionally;
3. a description of how long-term linkages within the alumni community will be encouraged, coordinated, and integrated into existing Bureau initiatives.

A.6. Key Administrative Elements

1. Visas for Entry into the United States and Foreign Countries

To procure U.S. visas for the foreign Fellows, the primary award recipient will work with ECA and PAS at the respective U.S. Embassy. The award recipient will need to collect and submit to ECA all required biographical information on the foreign YLAI Professional Fellows that is necessary to complete the DS-2019 form required for their J-1 visas. To procure foreign visas for the American fellows, if necessary, the primary award recipient will work directly with the respective foreign embassy in the United States.

2. International Air Travel

The award recipient must comply with all federal regulations regarding the use of U.S. government funds including the Fly America Act. These regulations apply to both U.S. and foreign travelers.

3. Projected Program Timeline

ECA envisions the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean calendar as follows:

Spring 2016	Application period for foreign YLAI Professional Fellows
April-May	Initial review of applications
May-June	Semi-finalist applications circulated for review
June - July	Interviews conducted
July 15	Announcement of selected participants and alternates
July 15 – August	DS-2019s issued, visa interviews
October – November	Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean in the U.S.
Mid-November	YLAI Summit in Washington, DC

January – March 2017	American outbound exchanges take place
April 2017 to March 2018	Ongoing support (networking, mentorship, and investment opportunities)

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description.

Fiscal Year Funds: 2016

Approximate Total Funding: \$5,000,000

Approximate Number of Awards: 1(one)

Approximate Average Award: \$5,000,000

Floor of Award Range: none

Ceiling of Award Range: \$5,000,000

Anticipated Award Date: Pending availability of funds, March 15, 2016

Anticipated Project Completion Date: March 15, 2018

Additional Information: Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

C. Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount \$5,000,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years' experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) Technical Eligibility: All proposals must comply with the following or they will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D.1. Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact David Gustafson in the Professional Fellows Division, ECA/PE/PF, SA-5, Rm 03I14, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 632-6083 or GustafsonDP@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

Please specify ECA Program Officer Carol Herrera and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

D.2a. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under D.3p. “Application Deadline and Method of Submission” section below.

D.3a. You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

D.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

NOTE: Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Proposals should include the following items under the section headings in the GrantSolutions Application Checklist. All documents should be appropriately and clearly titled.

Online Forms

- SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance”
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, “Assurances - Nonconstruction Programs”
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as indirect agreements, form 990, SF-LLL, etc.

1. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be one page in length and include: the project title, the goals of the project, the names of all potential subaward recipients responsible for project implementation, and city hub sites.

2. Proposal Narrative

In 20, double-spaced pages, the proposal narrative should include/address all items **specifically referenced in this NOFO, in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI)**, and those items noted below:

3. Project Goals, Objectives, Anticipated Outcomes

Proposals should include a clear, succinct statement of project goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes that expand upon the YLAI goals stated in Section I of this NOFO. Objectives should be described in specific, measurable, and realistic terms that are achievable within the scope of the project, both in terms of time and funding.

4. Background Information on the applicant organization, subaward recipients, and partner organizations (both U.S.-based organizations and foreign-based organizations)

For each organization, the mission, the date of establishment, relevant expertise, past programmatic work, and ongoing programmatic work should be described. Previous awards from the Bureau since 2004 (especially those involving the exchange of young professionals), including both grants and cooperative agreements, should be listed by office (Citizen Exchanges, International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, etc.), project name, countries, year, and amount. Proposals should describe previous collaboration with proposed partner organizations, as well as clearly delineate a division of responsibilities between all organizations that will be involved in the program.

5. A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Proposals should describe in detail the applicant organization's proposed approach for monitoring and evaluation. For further guidance, please see Section D.3j "Program Monitoring and Evaluation." Detailed evaluation plans that put the narrative over the 20-page limit and sample evaluation surveys or other evaluation tools may be included as an attachment.

6. Budget

For more budget information including specific allowable costs, refer to both Section D.3m as well as the PSI. Proposals should describe how the award recipient will conduct budget oversight as it relates to project management. In addition, proposals must include a detailed budget narrative.

7. Attachments

The items below should be included as attachments. Please label each attachment in a clear and concise manner (i.e. Program Management Plan; Letters of Support, etc.).

- A Project Management Plan for the entire life of the project that lists, in table format, outputs (major tasks that will be implemented by the award recipient and partner organizations), dates, and the organization/staff responsible;

- Letters of intent from proposed subaward recipients; letters of commitment and/or letters of support from foreign partner organizations and proposed fellowship placement businesses and organizations;
- Resumes (no more than two pages in length) of proposed key staff at the applicant organization and all proposed subaward recipients that will be involved in the implementation of the project; and
- Draft program implementation materials such as the U.S. program schedule, the American Outbound program schedule, the program announcement, the program application, the agenda for the pre-departure orientation and the arrival orientation, and materials on any other key program elements.

D.3c. All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

D.3d. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

D.3e. In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. **All ECA awards recipient organizations** must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

D.3h. Adherence To All Regulations Governing The J Visa

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the official program sponsor of the exchange program covered by this NOFO, and an employee of the Bureau will be the "Responsible Officer" for the program under the terms of 22 CFR 62, which covers the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program (J visa program). Under the terms of 22 CFR 62, organizations receiving awards (either a grant or cooperative agreement) under this NOFO will be third parties "cooperating with or assisting the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program." The actions of recipient organizations shall be "imputed to the sponsor in evaluating the sponsor's compliance with" 22 CFR 62. Therefore, the Bureau expects that any organization receiving an award under this competition will render all assistance necessary to enable the Bureau to fully comply with 22 CFR 62 et seq.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-44, Suite 668
301 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20547

D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.3j. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as

well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

D.3l. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients: All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D.3m. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Budget requests may not exceed \$5,000,000. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification

D.3o. Allowable costs include the following:

1. *Travel.* International and domestic airfare; airline baggage and seat fees; visas for U.S. travelers; transit costs; ground transportation costs. Please note that all air travel must be in compliance with the Fly America Act. There is no charge for J-1 visas for foreign participants in Bureau-sponsored projects, however in-country travel costs for visa interviews or other reasons related to obtaining visas should be covered.
2. *Per Diem.* For U.S.-based programming, organizations should use the published Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. Domestic per diem rates may be accessed at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. ECA requests applicants to budget realistic costs that reflect the local economy and do not exceed Federal per

diem rates. Foreign per diem rates can be accessed at:

https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp

3. *Book and Cultural Allowances.* Participants are entitled to a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person, plus a book allowance of \$50. Interpreters should be reimbursed up to \$150 for expenses when they escort participants to cultural events. U.S. project staff, trainers or participants are not eligible to receive these benefits.
4. *Consultants.* Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria rates should not exceed \$250 per day per session. Organizations are applicants should include costs for any travel associated with procuring visas, including travel for interviews, delivering or picking up passports, etc.
5. *Administrative Costs.* Costs necessary for the effective administration of the project may include salaries for employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the PSI. While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to project costs, proposals in which the administrative costs do not exceed 28% of the total requested ECA funds will be deemed more competitive under the cost effectiveness and cost sharing criterion at Section E.1 Review Criteria below. Proposals should show strong administrative cost sharing contributions from the applicant, the in-country partner and other sources. Travel of primary award recipient staff or subaward recipient staff should be included in the exchange participant numbers.
6. *Reasonable Accommodations.* Organizations should budget for the reasonable accommodations of participating individuals with disabilities. Proposals may allocate up to 5 - 7% of the total requested ECA award funds for this purpose.
7. *YLAI Orientation Conference.* International travel to Washington, D.C. or other venue where the two-day YLAI Orientation will take place; ground transportation to and from the airport to the conference hotel; food and lodging for 250 Fellows, adequate conference space for approximately 300 participants (Fellows, grantee staff, speakers, facilitators, DOS staff, other invited guests.); travel from orientation to fellowship sites.
8. *Fellowships.* Lodging, per diem, transportation, and other necessary program-related expenses the Fellows may incur while at their fellowship sites.
9. *Weekly cohort entrepreneurial training sessions:* training materials, trainers, meeting space/equipment rental, etc.
10. *YLAI Closing Summit.* Travel to Washington, D.C; ground transportation to and from the airport to the conference hotel; food and lodging for 250 Fellows for three-day conference, adequate conference space for approximately 300 participants (Fellows, grantee staff, speakers, facilitators, DOS staff, other invited guests); international travel from Summit to home country.

11. *U.S. Fellows follow-on travel.* Travel, ground transportation, lodging, per diem, for approximately 30 U.S. Fellows for up to 15 days in relevant LAC countries.
12. *Room Rental.* The rental of meeting space should not exceed \$250 per day per activity. Any rates that exceed this amount should be cost shared.
13. *Materials.* Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials for fellows. Costs for high quality translation of materials should be anticipated and included in the budget.
14. *Supplies.* Applicants may propose to use award funds to purchase supplies, such as computers and printers; supply costs should be justified in the budget narrative. Costs for furniture are not allowed.
15. *Working Meal.* One working meal may be provided during U.S.-based and foreign-based components. Per capita costs for working meals may not exceed \$45/person, excluding room rental and other overhead charges. The number of invited guests may not exceed fellows by more than a factor of two-to-one.
16. *Return Travel Allowance.* A return travel allowance of \$70 for each foreign participant may be included in the budget. This allowance would cover incidental expenses incurred during international travel.
17. *Re-Entry Seminars.* Costs related to providing foreign fellows a re-entry seminar may include per diem, hotel accommodations, material development, and other related expenses.
18. *Health and Travel Insurance.* The award recipient will be responsible for working with ECA to ensure that both foreign and American fellows are enrolled in the ECA-sponsored Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). The premium is paid by ECA and should not be included in the proposal budget. Applicants may include costs for travel insurance for both foreign and American fellows in the budget.
19. *Wire Transfer Fees.* When necessary, applicants may include costs to transfer funds to foreign-based partner organizations. The primary award recipient is urged to research applicable taxes that may be imposed on these transfers by host governments.
20. *Post-program support.* Up to \$500,000 to provide ongoing support to YLAI Professional Fellows through a continuum of networking, mentorship, and investment opportunities for the year following the completion of their Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: Monday, December 28, 2015

Method of Submission:

Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Find" portion of the system.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

Please follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until just before midnight (11:59 p.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after

midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

D.3r. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

1. Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives: Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, direct linkage to the goals of the Special Professional Fellows Program for Latin America and the Caribbean, and relevance to the Bureau's mission. Proposals should demonstrate a realistic and achievable scope that fits within the budgetary and time parameters set forth in the NOFO. Proposals that secure one fellowship placement during the exchange rather than multiple, short-term placements with different U.S. organizations will be deemed more competitive under the Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives review criterion. Proposals should clearly

demonstrate how project objectives and key project elements, especially the development of individual projects by the foreign fellows, will be achieved through programmatic activities.

2. Support of Diversity: Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity and describe how that policy will be integrated into all aspects of the program including but not limited to selection of fellows, fellowship placements, program materials, training methodology, etc. Applicants should demonstrate readiness to accommodate fellows with physical disabilities. Applicants should refer to the Bureau's "Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines" in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI).

3. Institutional Capacity and Track Record: Proposals should include (1) the institution's mission and date of establishment; (2) detailed information about proposed partners including a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities; (3) an outline of prior awards, U.S. government and/or private support received, for programs of a similar nature; and (4) descriptions and resumes of key staff who will implement the program. The proposal should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. ECA will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

4. Program Monitoring and Evaluation: Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. Proposals should include draft evaluation instruments, such as surveys and questionnaires, plus a description of a methodology that will be used to link outcomes to original project objectives. Recipients must be prepared to work closely with the program office and ECA's Office of Evaluations to assure coordination of evaluation efforts as much as possible so as not to over-burden participants with redundant or overlapping survey instruments/questions.

5. Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing: The applicant should demonstrate efficient use of Bureau funds. The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. While there is no rigid ratio of administrative to project costs, proposals in which the administrative costs do not exceed 28% of the total requested ECA funds will be deemed more competitive under the Cost Effectiveness and Cost Sharing review criterion. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. The proposal should maximize cost sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

F.) Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices:

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a

Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>
<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

F.3. Reporting Requirements: You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

Mandatory:

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://www.grantsolutions.gov), in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 4.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D. "Application and Submission Instructions" above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

F.4. Program Data Requirements:

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place. Final schedules for in-country and U.S. activities must be received by the ECA Program Officer at least three work days prior to the official opening of the activity.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Carol Herrera, U.S. Department of State, Professional Fellows Division, ECA/PE/C/PF, SA-5, Rm. 03E16, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, (202) 632-6054 or herreracal@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information:**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F3. Reporting Requirements above.

(skip 4 lines)

Evan Ryan
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

October 28, 2015

